

Sip, sample, and shop at Indiana wineries.

By Sally Campbell Grout

Indiana wineries, like the very product they make, are meant to be savored. Stroll the grounds, learn how the wine is made, taste samples, and take your sweet (or dry?) time. Much of the wine from Indiana wineries is made with locally grown grapes; all of it is bottled with care and enthusiasm by people who have combined their passion with their business. There are more than 30 wineries across the state, and each offers a different experience. Here are just a few:

Bottled just for you (sort of).

At the Lake Michigan Winery in Whiting (888-TNT-WINE), you'll find tasty dry, sweet, and semi-sweet wines. To sample the products, enjoy a free wine tasting. But perhaps what's on the outside of the bottle is just as special as what's inside. This boutique winery specializes in personalized labels—and you can order them on any amount, even one bottle. Celebrate a wedding or anniversary or create special bottles for gift baskets. Labels can include pictures, logos, and specialized messages. Looking for something everyone in the family can enjoy? Lake Michigan Winery also offers sparkling non-alcoholic juice.

Drink in the fresh air, too.

While wine is a pleasure reserved for grownups, you'll find plenty of family fun at Anderson's Orchard & Winery in Valparaiso (877-941-WINE). On their 40 acres, you'll find rolling hills, ponds filled with fish, ducks, and geese, and plenty of growing grapes. Shop for farm-fresh seasonal fruit; warm baked goods; homemade jams and jellies; and crafts by local artists. Take a vineyard and winery tour and enjoy free wine tasting (if you're old enough, of course). Like what you've seen and sipped? Purchase some wine to go. Inspired to try the art of winemaking? Anderson's also sells home brewing and winemaking supplies.

Fine wines and fine tunes.

For most of us, getting through medical school would be challenging enough. But Dr. Charles Thomas, who became interested in winemaking during his 32 years as a successful Obstetrician-Gynecologist, earned a second "degree." In 1983, he completed the core courses in winemaking at the Napa Valley School of Cellaring. He was also certified as a professional wine judge. Today, you can share his passion for good wine at Chateau Thomas Winery, Tasting Room & Gift Shoppe in Plainfield (800-761-WINE). Chateau Thomas wines have earned many international awards, have been served to a United States president and vice president, and are stocked at the Indiana Governor's Mansion. Chateau Thomas produces about 32 wines of all types. Though anytime is a great time to

visit, summer brings an extra incentive. The Veranda Series opens May 13, 2005 with a performance by Ann McWilliams. Bring a blanket or a lawn chair and your appetite; plenty of food will be available, too. Passing through Brown County? Visit the satellite store in Nashville (888-761-WINE).

From cream and crimson to reds and whites.

When William Oliver moved his family to Bloomington in 1959, Indiana University gained a law professor. And a few years later, Bloomington—and the rest of the state—would gain something they didn't have: a winery. William Oliver eventually took his winemaking hobby beyond his basement and opened Oliver Winery (800-25-TASTE). Open to the public since 1972, Oliver Winery is now Indiana's oldest and largest winery. The wines are complemented by the beautiful grounds, which are the perfect place for a picnic. Keep your eye out for other Hoosier "products." The grounds feature a limestone sculpture made from local quarry blocks, and the new tasting room, constructed in 1997, is built using Indiana oak and traditional post and beam joinery.

You can almost taste the Hoosier hospitality.

Butler Winery & Vineyards (812-332-6660) uses only Indiana-grown grapes. Why? Their philosophy is that wine is the reflection of the climate, the soil, and the people who grow the grapes. You can give that theory a taste test at two locations. At the Winery & Vineyard, stroll through the vineyard and enjoy a picnic on the grounds or on the deck. (Cheese, crackers, and sausage are also available.) At the In-Town Tasting Room, located in a 90-year-old house just 10 blocks north of the downtown square, enjoy the outdoor seating area along with wine and snacks. Home brewing and winemaking supplies are also available.

A stroll and a sip.

With more than 133 blocks of 19th century architecture on the National Register of Historic Places, the town of Madison (800-559-2956) is made for a long, leisurely walk. But after you've taken in the sites (and probably taken a few pictures), what better way to end the day than relaxing with a nice glass of local wine? Madison is home to several wineries, including Thomas Family Winery (800-948-8466), where traditional wines and old-world ciders are made on site. Located in an 1850s stable and carriage house, Thomas Family Winery also serves fresh bread, imported cheeses and salamis in a pub-style setting. Time your visit for an acoustic "unplugged" musical performance that may be Celtic, Bluegrass, Modern, or Folk.

See the site, taste the wine.

If you've purchased a bottle of wine from Terre Vin Winery in Rockville (888-965-WINE) or Monticello (888-965-WINE), and the picture on the

bottle looks familiar, maybe it's because you've been there. Owners Dave and Dorothy Gahimer have named many of their wines for local features and towns (such as "Wabash Red" or "Port of Parke County"), and label illustrations were painted or photographed by family members or friends. Count Dave and Dorothy among other Hoosiers who have turned their winemaking hobby into a business. And talk about local flavor. Terre Vin Winery has a wine called Wabaschwein™ that's made exclusively from grapes grown in New Harmony, Indiana.

Wine with a Swiss-German flair.

Say the name Winzerwald out loud, and it will roll around your tongue like a fine blush wine. That's appropriate, since Winzerwald Winery in Bristow (866-6WINZER) takes its name from the German word for "vintner of the forest." Owners Dan and Donna Adams honor their German heritage, and the Swiss and German heritage of the area, by operating America's only German- and Swiss-style winery. In fact, an award-winning blush wine is made from what the Adams refer to as their "German mystery grape;" family lore says the grape was brought to America by Dan's ancestors. You can see plenty of grapes when you tour the vineyard. You can also enjoy free tastes, tours, a wine garden, and a gift shop.

In honor of the name, sip slowly.

Turtle Run Winery in Corydon (866-2TURTLE) is a relatively new Indiana winery. The first crop came into vintage in 2000, and owners Jim and Laura Pfeiffer continue to grow their business right along with their grapes. Available wines include Snapper White 2001, Vignoles 2003, Blackberry, and Concord.

Wondering where to start?

For a palate-pleasing overview of Indiana wines, mark your calendar for the first Saturday in June and the Vintage Indiana Wine & Food Festival in Indianapolis (800-832-WINE). Located in Military Park, the event showcases more than 100 wines, wonderful food, live music, artists, a Kid Zone, and food and wine seminars.

Wine enthusiasts with more than a day to spend may want to tour the Indiana Uplands Wine Trail, which takes you to seven wineries in South Central Indiana: Butler Winery in Bloomington (812-332-6660), Carousel Winery in Bedford (877-AWine4U), French Lick Winery in French Lick (888-494-6380), Huber Winery in Starlight (800-345-WINE), Oliver Winery in Bloomington (800-258-2783), Turtle Run Winery in Corydon (866-2TURTLE), and Winzerwald Winery in Bristow (866-6WINZER). As you travel the trail, you can take tours, sample wine, and see the beautiful landscape of the area. For details on this unique tour, visit indianauplands.com.

The Indiana Wine Grape Council (800-832-WINE) in West Lafayette is your resource for information on Indiana's wineries. Call or stop by for a free brochure with a complete list of Indiana's wineries. For more information, and for ideas on places to stay or explore near Indiana wineries, visit enjoyindiana.com